1892

CHRISTMAS

AT THE

INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL.

TUCSON, ARIZONA.

CHRISTMAS AT THE INDIAN SCHOOL.

"Oh, I do wish that we could have one of these for Christmas," so exclaimed one of our teachers a few days before Christmas one year ago. "One of what," I asked, looking up, only to find the teacher engaged in turning the leaves of a child's book apparently in the most careless way possible. "One of these," said the teacher; and the finger went down upon a highly colored picture of a Christmas tree loaded with decorations and presents. The wish of Miss Schreiner was gratified; and a precedent was established.

"Of course we are going to have a Christmas tree this year," said Miss Gibson about two weeks since. "Mr. Billman, you could not think of denying the children this pleasure." After having passed through three Christmas seasons here, a very careful observer, Mr. Billman is not yet able to state whether in his opinion, the teachers or the children enjoy the Christmas tree the more. But it would not do to ignore the precedent of the previous year.

It seems very easy to say, "Yes, we will have a Christmas tree," wait until we get it, To accomplish this feat an expedition is fitted out, consisting of the carpenter, the farmer and six of our largest boys. These, early on Monday morning, loaded bedding and provisions for a two days' journey into two wagons, and set out for the mountains. In Arizona Christmas trees are not accommodating enough to grow just outside the door as they do in Ohio and New York, About 8 o'clock Tuesday evening the company returned, bringing in a large load of trees, for which they had journeyed about fifty miles by wagon, having carried the trees a long distance down the mountain side, where it was impossible to penetrate with the wagon. Mild calamities only had befallen them. "Old Major," who is almost old enough to be a citizen, and whose teeth are not as sharp as they were before he entered the army, (he is a retired cavalry horse), preferred the bread of the campers to his own barley. This was all right so far as 'Old Major' was concerned, but it put the party on half rations for the remainder of the journey. A healthy and enterprising wood-tick had, during the night while the party was asleep, decided to take up winter quarters in the ear of one of the boys. He proceeded to act accordingly, and was only induced to come out by the aid of our physician, after the return of the party.

We selected one of the finest trees for our own use, and put the remainder upon the market. Then came the work of decorating the tree, getting ready the presents, and preparing the Christmas dinner. Through the kindness of friends abroad and at home we had an abundance for these objects. Several boxes and barrels had been sent us by friends in the east, containing dolls, and:—but I shall not attempt to give a list of the many things that were found in them. Merchants and others of Tucson who have always treated us fairly, came forward this year and treated us generously. Above forty dollars in cash was contributed, besides candy, nuts, mince pies, oranges, and a cake that was a wonder for size and ornamentation.

Being so rich in Christmas cash, we ventured upon an unheard of extravagance for us. Ten fine turkeys were purchased and shut up awaiting the advent of Christmas day.

Wednesday the teachers placed and decorated the Christmas tree. It was a beauty as it stood adorned with the many bright, sparkling ornaments kindly sent to us. Our children are very fond of music; so Wednesday evening we secured a Mexican band of five pieces to come over and play an hour for their entertainment. That unsanctified instrument—the violin—hath charms not only for young ears, but for older ones as well. We all enjoyed the music; but the children seemed perfectly happy. "We will play one more piece," said the leader, "shall we play Home, Sweet Home or a piece of dance music" "Yes, play Home Sweet Home." Ah, here is a piece of music for the millions. Some of us (not the children) had our own thoughts as we heard the violin take up the refrain. "there is no place like home, there is no place like home," but we love our work, and whether is it better after all to be content to enjoy always one's own home, or to seek to make homes for the coming generations of our common humanity? "Children, will you have your presents tonight, or would you rather wait until tomorrow?" "We will wait until tomorrow," they exclaimed.

Christmas day at 9 o'clock we all gathered about the tree to give them their presents; and if any of you are sceptical as to the great doctrine, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," come and spend just one Christmas day with us.

Then came the Christmas dinner. Did you know the fondness for a nicely roasted young turkey is a cultivated taste? Here is the proof. The carvers could hardly prevent small estray pieces from finding their way to their mouths as they were carving, it looked and smelled so savory. Yet a number of the small boys who are with us this year for the first time, would not touch it, When the older boys discovered the state of affairs many were the calls "pass it this way please." Here is proof positive that the Indian can be civilized.

As for the rest, the day was given to play with doll and ball, and the many other toys which the fertility of the human brain has provided to give joy to childhood; and as for our feelings, Miss Pierson shall be spokesman for us as she says: "I was just as happy as I could be from the time I opened my eyes in the morning until I closed them that night."

A PARTICIPANT.

A LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

The Christmas presents received by the children were from boys and girls in the far eastern states, accompanied by the name and address of the giver and the pupils acknowledged the same by letters of their own composition and writing. The STAR publishes the following as a specimen of many written by these little Indians of the school:

INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL,
TUCSON, ARIZONA,
Dec 26, 1890.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—Our teacher wants us all to write letters this morning to those that sent the Christmas presents. I got the doll with your letter on it. I liked the doll very much and I will try and keep it very nice so that when I go home I will take it and remember you and tell my parents about you. that you live far from here but that you think about us and send us such nice Christmas presents. I thank you very much for the pretty doll. I will tell you all about our Christmas. Christmas eve some men from town came here and played for us and we enjoyed the music very much, then we all went up to our dormitory and then we prayed. Early in the morning some of the girls got up and they said to each other Merry Christmas, and then our matron came in and she, too, said it to us all. Then we all dressed and went down stairs and when we were at breakfast Miss Clara and Miss Laura, our teachers, came running in because they wanted to say it first to us. When we were through breakfast we hurried up in washing the dishes, when the bell rang we went in the big school room and got our presents. We had a very nice dinner, we had turkey, oranges, pies and mashed potatoes. I will tell you what I got, I got the doll handkerchief, ribbon beads, and a little bag and in the bag was a little pin cushion. Then we all had some pop corn, some candies and books. Now will you please tell me what Santa Claus gave you? Oh yes, in the evening we play, we were all in a circle, then one of our teachers ran and she struck one of the girls, then she ran after her. After a while when many of the girls ran one of the girls struck me and I ran after her, then I struck one of the teachers, Miss Clay, and she ran after me but she could not catch me, then I got in her place. The boys were playing not far from us.

Mr. Billman and Mr. Downie were with them. After a while Miss Grant came to where we were and we were all afraid; she was dressed all in white. Then all of the boys came where we were, She made the boys and girls laugh. The little girls were afraid of her. They thought she was a ghost. Then when she came near to us they all ran away and one of the girls fell and the girls stepped on her fingers and it was all bleeding. Then we took her into the kitchen to wash her fingers.

After that the bell rang, then we all went over for prayers. I will close with love. Your friend,

MATTIE.

How an Indian Boy Enjoyed Christmas.

TUCSON, Dec. 26.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—I am so glad that you sent me a nice bible and book and I got that bible and book on Christmas day at 9 o'clock, and all the boys and girls have a nice time. We all got balls and knives and marbles and candies and mouth organs and hankerchiefs and pop corn and some boys had got neckties and little watches, and now I will try and tell you what the girls got they got dolls and ribbons and books and beads and candy and pop corn and I don't know how many things they got, and we all went out and played marbles, and some of the little boys sold their knives and got marbles and I did not sell my knife because I want to use it in school to sharp my pencil with and I did not sell my things, I can just keep them myself, and now I have no marbles in my pocket, and now I will tell you about Christmas Eve, we had a nice time, some Mexican men came and played for the children, two men play the fiddle and one is largest and another played the flute and some friends came to see them and our superintendent said children do you want your presents now or wait for tomorrow, and we all said tomorrow, and we sang and had our prayer, and then we went up to our beds and sleep and in the morning our teacher said Merry Christmas boys and in the afternoon we ate turkeys and cakes and oranges and potatoes. Nothing now tell you good bye.

Your friend,

ANTONIO B. NORRIES.

Southern Mountain Work